***Identifying* *the Main Idea and Supporting Details***

A piece of informative writing has a topic. Each paragraph that develops the topic has a **main idea.** Writers may state the **main idea** of a paragraph directly, or they may let the readers figure it out for themselves. The **main idea** tells what a passage is about and can be either clearly stated or implied. **Stated** means that the idea is found in the selection and **implied** means that the main idea is left for the reader to find or guess it through the given details in the selection and between the lines.

The **supporting details** are small pieces of information that tell about the main idea. The other sentences in the paragraph add **supporting details** to the main idea. These **supporting details** are facts, examples, incidents or quotations that illustrate and develop the **main idea.**

To find the **main idea** in a text, one should look for the thesis statement since it has the controlling idea in the selection. If it is not clear enough, one should ask and answer six questions as follows:

1. What is the text about? **4.** When do the events take place?
2. Who is involved in it? **5.** Why did the major event happen? (reason)
3. Where do the events take place? **6.** How did it happen?

These questions supply a clear idea about the selection and the reader can easily find the main idea.

***Application***

1. ***Read the following passages, then select the best answer to each main idea:***
2. The United States has given the free world the concept of “The American Dream,” and thousands from all over the earth immigrate to America to pursue it. If one works hard, educates oneself and one’s children, obeys the laws, and executes the responsibilities of a citizen, one can expect prosperity. One’s children can only do better.
3. Hard work reaps rewards all over the earth.
4. Only the children profit from their parents’ efforts.
5. “The American Dream” is only a dream.
6. “The American Dream” promises earthly rewards for productive behaviors.
7. Working on a computer can be very frustrating if you don’t follow the rules. Rule one, for word processing is “Save your Work Frequently.” You can sit and yell at the machine when your stuff disappears. You can bang the keyboard. You can even cry. The fact remains, had you saved frequently, a lot more than nothing would still be there.
8. Even modern computers are not truly user friendly.
9. Word processing has lots of bugs, and the industry should be ashamed.
10. When the computer wins and you lose, get angry.
11. The wise typist “saves” often.
12. Blood is a miracle liquid. It flows to every part of the body. Some blood cells carry food and oxygen to body organs. Other blood cells kill germs and help stop cuts from bleeding. People can die if they lose a lot of blood or if their blood cells get sick. Doctors sometimes give people fresh blood to save their lives.
13. How many blood cells are made by the body **c.** How important blood is
14. Why people can die from loss of blood **d.** Why sick people are sometimes given blood
15. People do not really use music to charm snakes. Snakes have no ears, so they can’t hear a flute. The snake charmer startles the snake by waving a hand near it. The snake lifts its head to look around. The charmer then sways back and forth or moves the flute. The snake moves its head to keep an eye on the movement.
16. Why flute music charms snakes **c.** How people really charm snakes
17. Why snakes can’t hear sounds **d.** Why snakes have no ears
18. Mr. Randall had a hard time getting to the airport. First, he took the wrong exit off the highway and had to drive eight miles to get back on. Then, his car had a flat tire, and he had to fix it. When he was on his way again, he got stuck in a traffic jam. That took more time. Now, he was an hour late! When angry, Mr. Randall finally reached the airport, he discovered that the plane he was supposed to meet was an hour late too!
19. Mr. Randall had a good time on his way to the airport
20. Mr. Randall had a flat tire on the way to the airport
21. Mr. Randall had a hard time getting to the airport
22. Today, some farmers are using horses instead of tractors. Tractors and gas are becoming more and more expensive. Farmers are learning that horses work as well or better than tractors do. Draft horses, the strongest of the work horses, can pull anything a tractor can. Horses can also work in places where tractors can’t. Horses never break down in cold weather. They are clearly more affectionate.
23. Tractors cost a lot of money **b.** Horses make good friends **c.** Today, horses are replacing tractors
24. May 1 was spring- cleaning day in the Harris home. Everyone got up early. Sally and George had to wax the floors. Amy and Mr. Harris washed the windows. Ralph and Mrs. Hadi vacuumed the furniture. They all took a lunch break. Then, they cleaned their own closets. “This is the hardest job at all.” Amy groaned to herself.
25. The Hadi’s all had messy closets **c.** May 1 was spring- cleaning day in the Harris home
26. Ralph vacuumed the furniture
27. ***Find the main idea and write it on the lines below:***
28. Small desert animals have a hard life. The desert has very little water. During the day, the temperatures often go up to 120f, and it is too hot to move about. Few plants are able to grow in the desert, so small animals must spend a great deal of time searching for food. Large birds and coyotes are always hunting for smaller animals.

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1. The desert shrew is an animal that looks a little like a mouse. Shrews build nests that protect them against the heat. In that way, their bodies don’t lose water when the sun is hot. The desert shrew comes out during the cool desert nights. It feeds on large insects. The desert shrew has learned to live in the desert.

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1. When Delia woke up this morning, her kitten Tina, was gone. Delia looked all over the apartment but couldn’t find her. Delia finally left for school. Delia spent the day worrying about her lost kitten. She couldn’t study her lessons. She couldn’t even hear the teacher’s questions. She had a long face and her eyes were filled with tears. After school, Delia raced home. Her father said the kitten had not appeared. Delia sadly opened the closet to hang up her coat. As she did, something moved. A tiny ball of fur was asleep in her father’s boot.

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1. The Smith’s house was almost ready for the party. Everything was clean. The beautiful wooden furniture in the house was all polished. Mrs. Smith’s best dishes were on the table, and Mr. Smith was arranging some lovely flowers. Mrs. Smith was in the kitchen. Her hair was dirty, and she needed a shower. She was preparing dinner. The refrigerator was full of good things to eat and drink. They brought the refrigerator last year.

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1. Peter had a terrible day yesterday. First, he cut himself while shaving. He bled for ten minutes. Second, he missed the bus, and he had to stand in the rain for a long time. He was very wet when he arrived to his office. Then, he began to feel sick and got a headache, but had no aspirin. Finally, he forgot to write a report for his boss. The boss was very angry.

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1. Mary Houston is very happy with her teaching job. First, she loves little children. Her own children are grown now, and she really enjoys six -year -olds. Also, the other teachers are her good friends. They have the same interest, and they meet after work. Another thing, is her classroom. She loves it and puts pretty things on the walls. Finally, Mary loves to earn money. She does not have to ask her husband every time she wants to buy a new dress. She buys it for herself with her own money.

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1. Today’s economy is tough, but there are lots of ways that you can cut back. Instead of paying big bucks , you can save money by changing your own oil. Before you crawl under that car, you need to put on some clothes that you won’t mind getting dirty. You will also need to wear goggles, gloves and boots for your safety. Once you are properly dressed, crawl under the car and remove the oil plug. Drain the oil into an oil pan. Wait a few minutes to make sure that the old oil has drained completely, and then replace the oil plug. Now locate your car’s oil filter and use an oil filter wrench to remove it. Be careful: a small amount of the old oil may dump out of the filter. Replace your old filter with the new one and pour four or five fresh quarts of oil into your car’s engine.

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